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# The Letter; Finding My Mother's Copy of Hart Crane

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# Two Poems

KATHERINE MOSBY

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## The Letter

—for my father

This summer I found a letter of yours  
pressed in the book I was reading.  
I was afraid it would unfold our past:  
years I had pretended you were dead  
because you drank too much  
and didn't work and I didn't know  
where you lived when people asked.  
I was afraid that you might mar  
the morning with your absence.

In the letter you ask for me  
to write you, to read and love to read,  
to learn plants and birds by sight  
and all their names in Latin.

The print was faded and the words  
were soft and written for a child.  
They seemed as generous and kind  
as childhood could be, giving back  
what had been swept away. I pictured  
you by the ocean in your new house,  
waves breaking behind you as they must  
inevitably break, tossing up occasional  
“treasures,” which you sent me,  
objects with the edges worn smooth  
which I kept near but out of sight.

You were not there for me to tell you  
so I am writing this instead: I do love  
to read, and yes, I am learning  
how to name things: I call you "daddy"  
and I know that you have died.

## Finding My Mother's Copy of Hart Crane

Even the handwriting speaks of her,  
Though it must be thirty years—  
The pencil, sharpened to precision  
Marking the *grace* found in tapestries and birds:  
Tight and delicate, as though beauty  
And pain were of the same vast labor.

Her angles on the page, like portraiture  
Precise as a code she might have learned  
At home; thin as fingers reaching for something  
We could not agree on. Like her shape bending  
To find a piece of glass  
a wound (underlined in pencil):  
*silent as a mirror.*